



KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT
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Academic middle managers and management in university colleges and universities

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Four questions:

1. What is managerialism and what are its characteristics?
2. How did the national policy makers open the road for managerialism in institutions of higher education?
3. Do we find indicators of managerialism in higher education research of the 1990s?
4. Do deans, heads of departments, and heads of research units perceive the current management of institutions of higher education as having characteristics of managerialism?

1. In search of managerialism

Managerialism is a style of management that focuses on efficiency, effectiveness, quality assurance, decentralisation, and accountability.

1. Managerialists want a task to be fulfilled **efficiently** and want to know whether the acts reached the level of **effectiveness** targeted by the actors.
2. Quality assurance (QA): “concerned with ensuring that the products and processes are such that defective products are not made in the first place, so that the need for extensive quality control mechanisms at the end point of the production is not pressing” (Winch)
3. Accountability: upward, outward, inward etc.
4. Decentralisation: Units closer to the consumers are given the right (or duty) to decide about the production of the services.

2. Governing higher education in Belgium and managerialism

Neo-liberalism: The citizen in a neo-liberal society is a 'manipulatable man' responsive to what the state expects and is accountable for what he or she does. To obtain responsible citizens, the neo-liberal state creates instruments for surveillance and appraisal

Globalisation

Internationalisation

1989 Belgium: federal state

1991 and 1994: new laws

The question is whether the Flemish government with its laws of 1991 and 1994 had created a structure in which neo-liberalism could be applied and managerialism could develop.

Actions have been taken by the government to create a better climate for managerialism:

- the institutions can obtain more support from the government when they present an “educational development programme” and also when they establish “innovation projects”, which, however, had to be accepted by the government
- new system of financing higher education : institutions will be financed in function of the research output and the number of students (or, more specifically, the number of credits earned by the students).

University colleges

- 1) they became accountable for their output and functioning, which is monitored by various authorities
- 2) each institution has to establish an internal and external quality assurance system + accreditation
- 3) in order to make the university colleges strong enough to enable the management to be efficient, they had to merge.
- 4) the merging of university colleges boosted centralisation among them but also increased decentralisation by assigning more responsibility to departments and other smaller units
- 5) Associations and academisation

Universities

- 1) universities were made accountable for their work
- 2) internal and external quality assurance system + accreditation
- 3) Although the government wanted the universities to reduce the number of programmes, the universities kept them almost unchanged
- 4) The policy of the government also promoted decentralisation of decision-making
- 5) Nevertheless, the higher education policy did not assign the responsibility totally to the university boards although it did prescribe some steps they had to take.
(Bologna, Associations, academisation)

3. Managerialism in Flemish institutions of higher education in the 1990s

Universities

State university

- enterprising university
- a decentralised, dynamic organisation model
- we could not conclude that commercialisation was the ruling principle

Private university

- accountability and quality assurance
- decentralisation
- spin offs
- critique on managerialism

University Colleges

State university college

- “improve the cost-effectiveness of the college , improve its institutional competitiveness and see to the quality of education provided ”
- Merging of more than 10 small colleges into one large college meant that central offices had to be established
- a quality assurance policy was established in the different departments according to the general principles
- Once decisions were taken about the distribution of the funding among the departments, the departments acted very independently, which was also the case for human resource management

Private university college

- quality assurance system (ISO 9001)
- business orientation is the cornerstone of the entire curriculum
- teaching staff from the business environment and it maintains close contact with representatives of the industrial world

Survey: decentralisation had not been introduced into all of the decision-making process

4. Do middle managers of institutions of higher education recognize characteristics of managerialism?

4.1. Presentation of the questions and research design

- The question to be answered here is if similar characteristics (of managerialism) can be identified among the middle managers at present
- web survey and qualitative case studies
- This paper will concentrate on the **opinions of the middle managers** and whether there is a difference in these opinions in function of whether the manager was associated with a university or a university college and of the position occupied by the managers.

Population: middle managers of university colleges and universities

Sample: 4 of 6 universities and 11 of 22 university colleges

Table 1: Response percentages

	Number of managers receiving a questionnaire	Number of answers	Response percentage
University colleges	349	247	71%
Universities	584	362	62%
Total	933	609	65%

4.2. Vision on some aspects of managerialism

1. Personal decision making

Table 2: Preference for personal decision-making by managers

	N	Mean	Std dev	Min	Max
Individual leadership and decision making	598	3.98	0.85	1	5
1. I find it important that a researcher be able to choose his research himself.	590	3.95	0.88	1	5
2. I find it important that the lecturer himself be able to choose what he wants to teach.	595	3.02	1.11	1	5
3. I find it important that decisions be supported by those who have to fulfil them.	596	4.39	0.72	1	5

- middle managers in U and UC preferred individual leadership and decision making just as much (4.0 and 3.9, respectively) and are equally convinced that it is important that decisions be supported by those who have to implement them (4.4 and 4.4, respectively)
- middle managers in the U (score: 4.2) supported much more the idea that researchers should be able to choose their research
- the middle managers want to give the lecturers no total freedom to determine the content of their courses (less freedom in UC than in U)
- in the UC, the scores on the four variables of Table 2 for the heads of the departments, the programme coordinators, and other middle managers are almost the same.

In U: The different managers do not share the same opinion about decision-making by themselves: heads of the departments (score: 3.77) are less keen on decision-making by themselves than the research directors (score: 4.19)

2. Efficiency

Low scores

Table 3: Attitude toward the efficiency of the organisation

	N	Mean	Std dev	Min	Max
1. I find satisfaction of students more important than an efficient organisation.*	596	2.75	0.95	1	5
2. I find the satisfaction of lecturers more important than achieving the targets of our organisation.*	597	3.26	0.91	1	5
3. I prefer a delay in achieving some targets of our organisation above unsatisfactory lecturers.*	595	2.19	0.83	1	5
4. For myself, I find a professional relation with the lecturers more important than a collegial relationship.	591	2.98	1.01	1	5

- managers of the UC (score: 3.1 on 5) preferred significantly more a professional relationship than did the managers of the U (score: 2.9)
- the scores of the different types of decision-makers in the U and in the UC are not significantly different for the first three items
- in UC heads of department (score: 3.53) preferred more professional relations over collegial relations than did the programme coordinators (score: 2.98).

3. Quality assurance

Table 4: Attitude toward quality assurance

	N	Mean	Std dev	Min	Max
1. I think we should spend more time on offering good teaching than on organizing quality assurance.*	597	2.30	1.06	1	5
2. I find it important to pay constant attention to the assurance of the quality of the work of this unit.	598	4.15	0.77	1	5
3. If I have to choose among my obligations, I surely will choose to assure the quality.	592	3.27	0.94	1	5
4. The organisation of quality assurance demands more of the members of this organization than it yields benefits.*	593	2.70	1.12	1	5
Total quality assurance (four items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .67$)	602	3.10	0.71	1	4.75

- Quality assurance was appreciated more in the UC (score: 3.3 of 5) than in the U (score: 3)
- The different categories of the decision-makers in the U had no different appreciation of quality assurance.
- In UC: heads of departments (score: 3.49 on 5) were more in favour of quality assurance than were the programme coordinators (score: 3.15).

4. Accountability

Table 5: Attitude towards accountability

	N	Mean	Std dev	Min	Max
1. Good cooperation between lecturers is more important than a good system for lecturers to give account of their work (e.g., SET).	597	2.21	0.96	1	5
2. A lecturer has to account for his work at all times.	596	3.80	0.98	1	5
3. Each manager has to account for his work to his collaborators.	598	3.91	0.87	1	5

- attitude toward accountability among middle managers in the universities and in the university colleges was almost the same
- in UC: the managers stressed that the lecturer must be able to account for his work at any time
- in U: no difference among positions
- The middle managers of UC asked to give their opinion about the statement: “I find it important that students be seen as clients”, scored 3.84 on 5, whereas their colleagues in the U scored 2.89

4.3. Some forms of managerialist acting

4.3.1. Decentralisation of decision-making

- middle managers in HEIs experienced a hierarchical structure.
- The general pattern is that the higher the authority, the more decision-making power it has.
- one exception: as far as decision-making about research policy is concerned, we find the highest score (1.22) in the council of the interviewee and not in the hands of the interviewee herself or himself or a higher authority
- Hierarchy is clearly present in U and UC.
- Self-determination is generally weaker than the determination by the council chaired by the interviewee or by a higher authority.
- differences concerning: financial policy, education policy, HRM, research policy among actors in U and UC.

4.3.2. Efficient Management

Table 7: Self-assessment of the efficiency of managerial action

	N	Mean	Std dev	Min	Max
1. In my unit, quality assurance is not efficiently organised.*	579	3.69	0.88	1	5
2. In my unit, we don't have the instruments to manage the human resources efficiently.*	569	2.36	1.14	1	5
3. In my unit, we can apply a financial policy efficiently.	563	3.09	1.13	1	5
4. In my unit we can organise education efficiently.	579	3.78	0.92	1	5
5. In my unit we can't organise research efficiently.*	561	3.47	1.13	1	5
6. In my unit we can organise societal services efficiently.	563	3.40	1.00	1	5

- Most of the middle managers think that decision-making in their unit happens quite efficiently (score: 4.02), but this conviction is more visible in the U (score: 4.11) than in the UC (score: 3.90)
- Among the middle managers in the U and the UC, the opinion about efficient deliberation and decision-making was not different.
- managers of U and UC shared almost the same opinion concerning Items 1, 2, and 4 of Table 7 but not for Items 3, 5 and 6
- Are different positions of the managers in the two kinds of institutions at the root of different opinions about the efficiency of their respective units.
 - not so in U, but opinions in UC concerning some of the items in Table 7 did differ.

4.3.3. Quality assurance

Table 8: Assessment of quality assurance functioning and of the consequences of quality assurance

	N	Mean	Std dev	Min	Max
QA functioning	587	3.67	0.73	1.00	5
QA consequences	585	3.21	0.67	1.33	5

- In UC, the middle managers (score: 3.74) recognized not significantly more actions to protect the quality than did their colleagues in U (score: 3.62)
- The consequences of QA were appreciated more positively by U middle managers (score: 3.29) than by those of UC (score: 3.10)

- In UC the heads of departments, programme coordinators, and the rest category obviously share their views on the acts of quality assurance.
- This is not the case as far as the consequences are concerned
- In U research directors (score: 3.51) believe less in the good functioning of QA than programme coordinators do (score: 3.92)

4.3.4. Accountability

Table 9: Assessment of the instruments to measure accountability, expectations towards lecturers concerning accountability, and concerns about the accountability of the unit

	N	Mean	Std dev	Min	Max
SatInforAccount	587	3.70	0.72	1.20	5
ExpectAccount	481	4.28	0.72	1.00	5
ConcernAccount	471	4.23	0.67	1.50	5

- no significant difference between the opinions of the middle managers in the U (SatInfoAccount = 3.72) and the opinions of those in UC (SatInfoAccount = 3.72)
- expectations of the middle managers towards lecturers concerning accountability were significantly higher in UC (ExpectAccount = 4.42) than of those in U (ExpectAccount = 4.19)
- heads of departments in UC (ExpectAccount = 4.43) and the programme coordinators (ExpectAccount = 4.41) shared almost the same expectations
- heads of departments in UC (4.06) scored a little higher than did the programme coordinators (3.95) on the scale SatInfoAccount and on the scale ConcernAccount (3.91 and 3.68, in universities).
- The difference between the managers is most outspoken, between, on the one hand, the programme coordinators (ExpectAccount = 4.58) and, on the other hand, the heads of departments (ExpectAccount = 4.12) and the research directors (ExpectAccount = 4.13)

5. Conclusion

- 1) managerialism is a management style that is focused on efficiency, effectiveness, quality assurance, decentralisation, and accountability
- 2) the contribution of the national policymakers to managerialism in institutions of higher education
- 3) forms of managerialism in institutions of higher education in the 1990s
- 4) description of the perception of some managerialist

Table 10: Changes in management according to the middle managers (score from 1 tot 3)

	N	Mean	Std dev
1. In comparison with five years ago, do the managers pay more or less attention to the efficiency of the management of your institution?	532	2.75	0.53
2. In comparison with five years ago, do the managers of your institution pay more or less attention to the achievement of the targets?	547	2.77	0.49
3. In comparison with five years ago, does your institution pay more or less attention to assuring the quality of teaching?	561	2.80	0.46
4. In comparison with five years ago, are the managers of your institution more or less willing to delegate some of their tasks?	474	2.28	0.74
5. In comparison with five years ago, do managers have to account more or less for their management?	511	2.48	0.68
Assessment of change (composed of item 1 to 5; Cronbach's α = .69)	422	2.62	0.40

What values were shared by the middle managers concerning management?

- individual leadership and decision making were appreciated to a relatively high degree (3.99 on 5) and this in the U and UC alike.

- Efficient management was certainly one of the targets, but the middle managers kept the collegial feeling for lecturers and researchers. This collegial feeling seems to be a little stronger in U than in UC.

- Quality assurance was considered part and parcel of daily life for most of the middle managers (score: 4.15 on 5), and this more so in the UC than in the U.

But here, too, some reservations are in order. For instance, quite a few of the middle managers believed that good teaching has priority on the organisation of quality assurance.

- The middle managers also expected that the lecturers and other collaborators (score 3.91 on 5) to be accountable for their work but not at all times

Do these middle managers act according to these principles?

1) Although the middle managers stated that decision-making should be done as close as possible to the person who has to perform the task, they did not apply this principle in practice.

Middle managers experienced a hierarchical structure (in UC and U)

2) middle managers were relatively strongly convinced (score: 4.02 on 5) that decisions in their organisation are efficiently made and are supported by the general opinion (more in U than in UC)

3) although the middle managers considered QA to be a very important part of their task, they were less optimistic about the application of the system (UC high on QAfunctioning; U high on QAconsequences)

4) middle managers expected researchers and lecturers to be accountable (score: 4.28 on 5) and cared strongly about accounting for spending the budget and for research policy acts (score: 4.23 on 5).

Middle managers were not so satisfied about the information available to account for different forms of policy (SatInforAccount= 3.74).